

## Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 LONDON 12108 231020Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-10 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-14  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-07 OES-07 DODE-00  
ERDA-07 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15  
/121 W

-----050840 231025Z /21/40

P R 221528Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6373  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

UNCLAS LONDON 12108

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR TEXT //PARA ONE (1)//

PASS NRC AND ERDA

USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: ENRG, TECH, UK  
SUBJECT: BRITISH NUCLEAR AUTHORITIES REVEAL DATA ON  
"LOST" PLUTONIUM

1. SUMMARY. BRITAIN'S NUCLEAR POWER AGENCIES YESTERDAY REVEALED PUBLICLY THAT THEY ARE UNABLE TO ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 100 KG OF PLUTONIUM WHICH HAS "DISAPPEARED" FROM THEIR INVENTORIES. THEY ARGUED, HOWEVER, THAT THE INVENTORIES REVEAL MERELY "MATHEMATICAL" DIFFERENCES RATHER THAN GENUINE LOSSES. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 21 DONALD AVERY, DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS, GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE RELEASED, ON BEHALF OF BNFL AND THE UK ATOMIC UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 LONDON 12108 231020Z

ENERGY AUTHORITY, DETAILS ON MATERIAL UNACCOUNTED FOR IN RELATION TO CIVIL NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES AT THEIR ESTABLISHMENTS FOR THE YEARS 1970/1971 TO 1976/77. PRESSURE FOR SUCH REVELATION AROSE, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, WHEN FIGURES ON THIS SUBJECT WERE PASSED TO THE INSPECTOR AT THE PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THE EXPANSION OF OXIDE-FUEL RE-PROCESSING FACILITIES AT WINDSCALE. IN A STATEMENT IN

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON JULY 21, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY BENN WELCOMED THE DISCLOSURE, AND SAID THE FIGURES WOULD IN FUTURE BE RELEASED ANNUALLY. BNFL AND UKAEA DENY THAT THE INFORMATION HAS BEEN GIVEN AS A RESULT OF PRESSURE FROM THE GOVERNMENT; THEY SAY THAT WITH THE LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLICATION OF SIMILAR FIGURES IN THE U.S. SOON, PRESSURE FOR PUBLICATION OF THEIR OWN STATISTICS WOULD HAVE BECOME IRRESISTABLE.

3. THE FIGURES SHOW THAT IN 1970-71, 56 KILOS OF PLUTONIUM WAS LOST IN THE INVENTORY AT WINDSCALE. IN MORE RECENT YEARS DISCREPANCIES HAVE BEEN LESS, WITH AN INVENTORY DEFICIT OF 32.5 KG IN 1971-72 AND 16.1 KG LAST YEAR. IN CERTAIN YEARS THE INVENTORY RECORDS A GAIN. THIS, IT WAS EXPLAINED IS AN INDICATION THAT THE INVENTORIES REVEAL MATHEMATICAL DIFFERENCES RATHER THAN GENUINE LOSSES OR GAINS. AVERY SAID SOME UNCERTAINTIES IN MEASUREMENT AND ESTIMATION WERE UNAVOIDABLE, AND A SMALL ACCOUNTING DIFFERENCE WAS TO BE EXPECTED AT THE END OF EACH YEAR. HE AGREED THAT THE DISCREPANCIES IN SOME YEARS WERE UNACCEPTABLY HIGH AND THAT UKAEA AND BNFL CONTINUALLY SOUGHT TO IMPROVE THEIR MEASURING AND ACCOUNTING PROCESSES, THOUGHT THIS IS DIFFICULT WHERE 20-YEAR OLD MAGNOX REACTORS ARE IN USE.

4. WHILE THE AMOUNT OF PLUTONIUM LOST WOULD BE ENOUGH  
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 LONDON 12108 231020Z

TO MAKE SEVERAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS--THE TIMES SAYS 15--AVERY SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WAS NO GROUND FOR "CONCERN OVER EITHER SAFETY OR SECURITY. THE MEASUREMENTS OF MATERIAL LEAVING THE SITES, WHETHER AS PRODUCTS OR IN WASTE STREAMS, ARE SUFFICIENTLY PRECISE TO RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE OF SUCH QUANTITIES COULD GO UNNOTICED, WHILE THE PHYSICAL SECURITY MEASURES IN FORCE GIVE ASSURANCE THAT THE MATERIAL HAS NOT BEEN STOLEN".

5. FRIENDS OF THE EARTH SAID LAST NIGHT THAT THE FIGURES GAVE CAUSE FOR CONCERN AND THAT THE AGENCIES HAD FAILED TO SHOW THEY USED THE DEGREE OF SECURITY THE PUBLIC DEMANDED. AS VOLUME OF NUCLEAR PROCESSING INCREASED, PRESENT MARGINS OF ERROR IN ACCOUNTING INDICATED THERE WOULD BE EVEN-LARGER ABSOLUTE DISCREPANCIES.

6. THE PRESS CONFERENCE RECEIVED THOROUGH THOUGH NOT PROMINENT COVERAGE IN THE PRESS; IT WAS GIVEN MORE PROMINENT TREATMENT ON TV AND RADIO.

STREATOR

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DATA, PLUTONIUM, REPORTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 22-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977LONDON12108  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770262-0581, D770266-0762  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** LONDON USEEC  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770730/aaaaazeb.tel  
**Line Count:** 116  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** c5d05b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1780623  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BRITISH NUCLEAR AUTHORITIES REVEAL DATA ON "LOST" PLUTONIUM  
**TAGS:** ENRG, TECH, UK, GR, TU, NATO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/c5d05b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009